

one side—was happy to play host to this toxic fringe behavior. Only one side's leaders are now openly calling for more of it. They haven't seen enough. They want more.

I am afraid this is only phase 1 of the meltdown. We are already seeing desperate voices on the far left explain that, well, because they lost this fight, even more drastic steps are in order.

There is crazy talk—crazy talk—about impeaching Justice Kavanaugh. There are left-wing writers demanding that Democrats pack the Court—a zombie idea from the 1930s they have dug up just in time for Halloween.

How about this: One columnist for a national newspaper called the result a coup—a coup—and implied that the Founders got it wrong and designed the Senate incorrectly. They want to rewrite the Constitution? The Founding Fathers got it wrong? Handling defeat badly is one thing, but regretting the Constitution itself because you don't like how a vote turned out—really? This is something else. But I guess it is not entirely surprising given the outright embrace by many on the left, including elected officials, of radical concepts like open borders and socialism.

Anyone who thinks that intimidation and scare tactics might rule the day must have missed the Senate's vote last Saturday. Maybe they weren't tuned in. This body will not let unhinged tactics replace reasoned judgment. We will not let mob behavior drown out all the Americans who want to legitimately participate in the policymaking process on all sides. The Senate, I assure you, will not be intimidated.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, yesterday the Senate passed broad, bipartisan legislation to maintain our Nation's waterways and drinking water systems. Now we are turning back to the personnel business and confirming more of the President's qualified nominees to important executive branch positions.

We voted yesterday to advance the nomination of Jeffrey Clark to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division.

Mr. Clark's qualifications include several years of prior service as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in that same position. He has also built a strong reputation in the private sector as a leading litigator with subject-matter expertise in administrative law. Mr. Clark's legal colleagues describe him as "one of the most capable lawyers with whom [they] have ever worked." No fewer than seven former Assistant Attorneys General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division tell the Senate that his well-rounded background and prior experience in the division make him an excellent choice for this position.

After we confirm Mr. Clark, we will consider another Assistant Attorney General nominee, Eric Dreiband, for the Civil Rights Division. Mr. Dreiband is also well prepared to serve. His resume includes several stints of public service, including as general counsel of the EEOC, in addition to private sector experience. Others have praised his service at the EEOC as "widely respected," "in the highest rung of the Agency's general counsels," and a "record of superlative performance." Those who have worked with Mr. Dreiband emphasize his strong commitment to protecting all Americans' civil rights.

In the words of one leader who is known and worked hard with the nominee for 15 years, "his commitment to fairly enforcing the law is without question."

After Dreiband will come James Stewart, the President's choice to serve as Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Mr. Stewart's experience managing military manpower runs deep through his distinguished career at the U.S. Air Force, from which he retired as a major general.

He has most recently served on the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and on the Secretary of Defense's Reserve Forces Policy Board.

Each of these nominees deserves confirmation, and I would urge our colleagues to approve all of them.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, it has been more than 9 months since Republicans passed the most sweeping tax reform in a generation. Here are just a few of the economic headlines we have seen since it took effect: consumer confidence at an 18-year high, faster year-on-year wage growth than at any point since 2009, and the lowest national unemployment since 1969—almost 50 years ago.

Behind all of these numbers are middle-class families whose lives are changing for the better, and the effects are reaching all kinds of communities—even the places most neglected for nearly a decade by the Obama administration's so-called recovery.

After years of investment and job creation being disproportionately concentrated in the biggest metropolitan areas, 2018 has been a different story. So far this year, it has been smaller and rural communities—smaller and rural communities—that have led the Nation in relative job growth. Out across the heartland, empty storefronts and stagnant local economies are giving way to vibrant transformation and new opportunities.

So when we hear that States like Missouri are thriving again on the watch of the Republicans' pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda, it really shouldn't come as a surprise. It shouldn't surprise us that Missouri's statewide unemployment rate has

reached its lowest level since 2000—the lowest unemployment in 18 years.

News like this will not surprise anyone who has been listening to the accounts of Missourians, like Mary Beth Hartman, who runs a small construction company in Springfield. She says the new tax law has given her the flexibility to expand vacations and bonuses for her employees and invest half a million dollars in new equipment.

Or Brandon Pister—he used his tax reform bonus to help his family cover medical expenses and put money into savings.

The junior Senator from Missouri can be proud that he voted for the historic policies that helped unleash all of this good news. It is a shame that his colleague, the senior Senator from Missouri, chose to vote in lockstep with Senate Democrats and try to block tax reform from taking effect.

Republicans will keep sharing success stories like these from Missouri and keep helping the American people write more.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HURRICANE RECOVERY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, let me say to the people of Florida, Georgia, and everyone else affected by Hurricane Michael that our thoughts and hearts are with you. Having worked and lived through the recovery of Hurricane Sandy in my home State of New York, I remember vividly the anguish of families who lost their homes and businesses the day or two after and then realizing it took years for areas of New York and Long Island to recover. We are still in the process of recovering. I know, A, your pain and suffering and, B, the challenges that await you.

So we hope everyone stays safe as the storm passes through the country. We know that Americans and the Senate will pull together, as they always do, to help one another build and recover.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this year has seen a huge number of powerful storms and hurricanes both on the Atlantic seaboard and in the gulf. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, and now Michael have wrought severe damages. According to

NOAA, 2017 was the most expensive year on record for disasters in the United States. At some point, we have to acknowledge that the intensity of these storms is much greater than in past years and is a symptom of changing climate.

Climate change is real. It is being driven by human activity. It is happening right now. These are facts. They are not in dispute. Our scientists know it, our businesses know it, the world knows it, and the American people know it. But too many Senators on the other side of the aisle just put their heads in the sand. It costs us more and more and more. We are not going to leave these people high and dry, but if we would do more on climate change, we would have fewer of these hurricanes and other types of storms.

Everyone knows that, except a few. Why? Why don't they admit the truth? Maybe there are two words that explain it: oil industry.

Just this week the U.N. released a report on climate change, saying that the world has only a short time—maybe a little more than a decade—to get a handle on carbon emissions. So far, the current administration has done nothing but move the issue backward. It is amazing that we, the leading country that is supposed to be the moral force—the economic, political, and military leader—are the ones who pull out of the Paris climate accords, and then the administration has been repealing environmental protection after protection.

So while we are thinking about the people of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina and everyone in Hurricane Michael's path, let's remember we are running out of time to do something about climate change. The kinds of storms we are seeing now will only increase if this body continues to keep its head in the sand ostrichlike and ignore the scientific realities.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on another matter—healthcare—yesterday, 50 of my Republican colleagues voted against ensuring protections for people with preexisting conditions—people with asthma and cancer, people with diabetes and all kinds of gynecological problems. Republican Senators sided with the Trump administration to expand the ability of insurance companies to sell cutrate, junk insurance to Americans—to dupe Americans. These plans will destabilize the healthcare market and raise the cost of insurance for people with preexisting conditions who may end up being priced out of insurance altogether.

Let me say that again. Republicans yesterday voted to let insurance companies offer junk insurance plans that don't cover essential health benefits, allowing them to nickel-and-dime patients out of the medical care they deserve.

Our constituents—Democrats, Republicans, north, west, east, and south—say they want better healthcare at a lower cost, and what do Republicans do? They offer worse healthcare coverage at a higher cost, ultimately, to people, because the plans don't cover anything and then you have to pay out of your pocket.

What did they do it in the name of? Freedom. Freedom. This is like the 1890s. Who is going to have freedom? The insurance companies, the big shots. Who is going to have no freedom from illness and disease? Average folks. It is terrible thinking, once again siding with big, powerful special interests, not the average person.

The only people who want these junk insurance plans are two groups—the insurance companies and the rightwing ideologues who believe the government shouldn't be in healthcare at all. They want to cut Medicare. They want to cut Medicaid. They want to cut Social Security. That is who it is.

So let us remember that the junk insurance plans are hardly worth the paper they are printed on. They lure consumers in with low premiums, but the deductibles are so high, the copays are so high, and the coverage so skimpy that the plans hardly offer any benefit to the consumer at all.

While every Republican save one voted to hand the keys to the insurance companies, every single Democrat—every single Democrat—stood up to the sabotage from the Trump administration and voted to not allow the expansion of junk insurance across America.

I warn my colleagues that these are the kinds of issues that voters remember come election time. Healthcare is the No. 1 issue in America to the broad majority of voters. The American people will head to the polls in November and ask themselves: Which party will defend the people's right to quality healthcare? Which party will not?

The answer to that question could not be clearer. Democrats have spent the past 2 years offering several plans to reduce the cost of healthcare while maintaining or increasing the quality, while President Trump and Republicans in Congress have done nothing but drive costs up and quality down in obeisance to the big special interests—the insurance industry.

They have tried to repeal the healthcare law. They have tried to gut Medicaid, eliminate healthcare for millions of Americans, and put the insurers back in charge. They have eliminated the program to help low- and middle-income Americans afford insurance and, worst of all, Republican attorneys general—including two running for the Senate, one in Missouri and one in West Virginia—are suing, as we speak, to eliminate protections for Americans with preexisting conditions.

These actions are undergirded by a belief on the other side of the aisle that the American people just don't deserve help affording adequate healthcare. Re-

publicans have believed, continue to believe, and have acted on, unfortunately, that insurance companies should rule the roost, just as in the 1890s. The consequences are severe.

As a result of the Republican healthcare agenda, premiums are up by double digits in several States and quality is down. As a result of the Republican healthcare agenda, Americans are paying more and getting less.

I say to the American people that in a few short weeks you will have a choice. You can vote for 2 more years of healthcare sabotage from a Republican Congress, more attempts at repealing the healthcare law, more premium increases and uncertainty, more actions that undermine protections for patients with preexisting conditions or the American people can vote to flip the script and support Democratic candidates who will not only protect the care that Americans have today but who will work every single day to make it better.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Bossert Clark, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

FAA/CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I think by any standard, as we conclude this Congress, the House and Senate, working together, have put more legislation on the President's desk that has long-term impact than at any time in a long time, whether it was the opioid legislation or healthcare research funding.

I want to talk a little bit today about the Federal Aviation Administration extension that, just last week, the Senate passed and the President signed. I believe the 5-year reauthorization is the longest reauthorization since the 1980s. So the traveling public, the FAA itself, the Department of Transportation, and the airline carriers of both people and freight have an understanding of what the next 5 years should look like.